

Support for Parents as They Talk to Their Child about PARCC Scores

The PASS model refers to the term "parent" as any adult who plays an important role in a child's family life.

Parents can use the score reports to help their children in many ways. One of the most important ways is to have a conversation about the test results with their child. This document includes a lot of information, and parents are encouraged to select the information most appropriate for their child. Prior to speaking with their child regarding PARCC score reports, parents may want a refresher on the PARCC Assessments from the state report released on October 20, 2015 <http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/parcc/informing.pdf>.

The PARCC parent score reports give a breakdown of performance in categories of English language arts and math. This breakdown helps parents understand and talk to their child about his or her performance in school, whether he or she needs additional practice or to be challenged by going deeper into a subject. Parents can also use the test results to guide a discussion with their child's teacher about additional supports or challenges that may be needed in class, as well as other ways to support their child at home.

Parents and teachers can work together to use PARCC results and to find resources that will match the student's areas of strength and areas for improvement. Parents and their child can also locate activities online that were designed specifically for every grade level. To find resources in every category and at every grade level, parents can visit <http://bealearninghero.org/skill-builder>, <http://www.greatschools.org/gk/test-guide/>, or <https://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2910>.

It is likely that through conversations at school and with their friends, students will hear information about the release of the PARCC test scores. If they choose, parents can use the opportunity to begin an informed conversation about their child's test results. It is important for students to understand that the results of the PARCC test are intended to help teachers, parents, school districts *and* students. Of equal importance is for students to understand that the PARCC results are only one among several other measurements of their learning.

The results of the PARCC test will not negatively affect student placement or admission to special programs. However, the SAT, ACT, and individual college placement exams have begun alignment with higher-level academic standards, and their tests have begun to resemble the PARCC test. New Jersey students should know that the graduating classes of 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 will not have to pass the PARCC assessment as a requirement for graduation.

Parent reports contain student scores and performance levels

What do the performance levels mean? The performance levels on the score report describe how well students met the academic expectations for their grade level. The scores also serve as a signal that the student is academically prepared to successfully participate in further studies in each content area, the next grade's material, and later, at the high school level for students to demonstrate that they are college and career ready.

Level 1: Did not yet meet expectations

Level 2: Partially met expectations

Level 3: Approached expectations

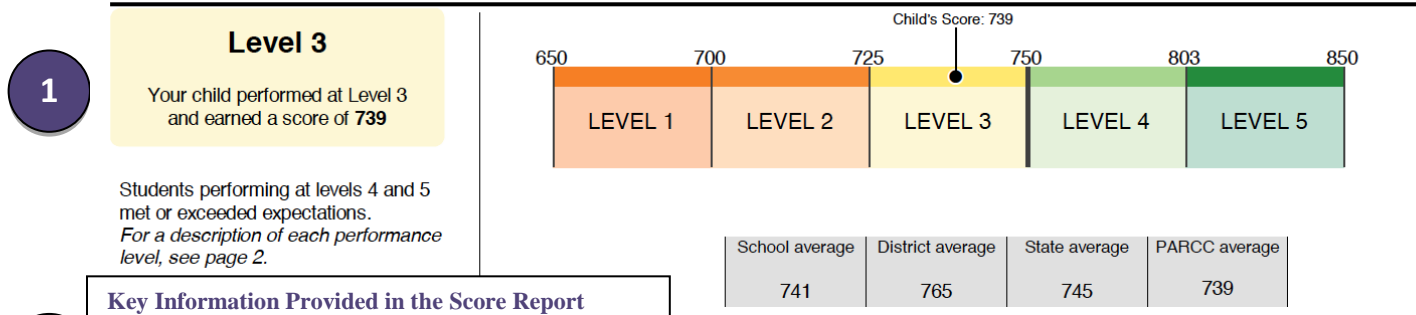
Level 4: Met expectations

Level 5: Exceeded expectations

Below is a sample score report. Following the report are some conversation starters for young and middle level students. It is likely that high school students can understand the information on the score reports and can discuss the results directly from the reports.

PARCC performance levels indicate what a typical student at each grade level should know based on his/her command of grade-level standards. Parents should use their own judgement in considering their child's developmental maturity, grade level, interest, ability to comprehend and potential benefit from a discussion about PARCC scores.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY PERFORMANCE



1 Overall Student Performance – This section of the report shows your student's overall numerical score and the performance level achieved based on that score. Level 1 indicates a student is not yet meeting grade level expectations and Level 5 indicates the student has a strong understanding of grade level material. Level 4 and above indicates that a student meets or exceeds grade level expectations and is well prepared for the next grade level.

2 Score Graph – The colored graph shows the score ranges for each performance level and where your child's score falls within that range. This gives you an indication of how close your child is to achieving the next level.

3 Score Comparisons: Unlike many previous state test score reports, PARCC score reports show how your student is performing compared to students in the same grade at the same school, across the school district, around the state, and across the states administering the PARCC test.

READING

4

Reading score range: 10 to 90	Average of students just meeting expectations 50	School average 52
Your child's score: 44	District average 48	State average 45

WRITING

Writing score range: 10 to 60	Average of students just meeting expectations 35	School average 39
Your child's score: 30	District average 35	State average 31

4 Reading and Writing Performance – The report for the English language arts test will show your student's overall performance in two main sub-categories: reading and writing. It will show your child's numerical score for a sub-set of questions in those categories. This section includes the average reading and writing scores of students who achieved an overall performance of Level 4 on the test, as well as average scores for the school, district, and state.

LITERARY TEXT

5 In this area, your child did not do as well as students who met the expectations.

Students meet expectations by showing they can read and analyze grade appropriate fiction, drama and poetry.

INFORMATIONAL TEXT

In this area, your child did almost as well as students who met the expectations.

Students meet expectations by showing they can read and analyze grade-appropriate non-fiction, including texts about history, science, art, and music.

VOCABULARY

6 In this area, your child did as well as or better than students who met the expectations.

Students meet expectations by showing they can use context to determine what words and phrases mean in grade-appropriate texts.

WRITING EXPRESSION

In this area, your child did not do as well as students who met the expectations.

Students meet expectations by showing they can compose well-developed, organized, and clear writing, using details from what they have read.

KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

In this area, your child did as well as or better than students who met the expectations.

Students meet expectations by showing they can compose writing using the rules of standard English, including those for grammar, spelling, and usage.

LEGEND

Below Expectations Nearly Meets Expectations Meets or Exceeds Expectations

5 Detailed Breakdowns – The score report also provides information about your child's performance on specific skills within English language arts, so you can see where your student is excelling or needs additional support. Each area includes a description of the skills needed to demonstrate a clear understanding of grade-level standards.

6 Explanatory Icons – This is a guide to the icons used above, so you can quickly see how your child's performance in each area of the test compares with that of students who met grade level expectations.

The best way to make sense of the scores is to compare them to the average for students who met the expectations and the average for students in your child's school, district and state. Also look at the information below the scores. How is your child doing in each area?

Ask your child's teacher how you can give your child more opportunities to be challenged and how you can support his/her academic needs.

Parents can use the score reports to partner with their child's teacher

Parents may want to ask their child's teacher about talking to their child about test results. Parents can ask:

- How is my child performing according to standards/expectations?
- How well is my child performing relative to school, district, state?
- What can we do now?
- How has my child's performance changed over time?
- What can we expect for next year's assessment?
- What can we do at home, in class and at school to help continue building my child's knowledge and skills in areas where he or she exceeds the expectations?

The knowledge and skills tested this year are different from NJASK or HSPA – and in some cases more challenging.

If a parent finds that their child's score is different than expected, they should meet with their child's teacher to understand what that means and how to help their child improve his or her performance.

How can parents and teachers use the information on the score report?

Parents can use this information to understand their child's needs and strengths and work with their teachers to identify resources to support their child's education at home and at school.

How will the school use the test results?

Schools can use this information to better plan instruction, provide support and enrichment for students in the coming year and strengthen their instructional programs for all students.

Who else gets this information besides parents and teachers?

Student score results and other information is highly protected and not shared. Schools only get the information educators need to make decisions about instruction. No student-specific information is shared with outside groups or the federal government. States maintain control over what is done with student information. Read the PARCC states [Data Privacy and Security Policy](#).

What can I do at home to support my child?

There are many online resources that provide information about standards and assessments for each grade, tools to enhance your child's learning in these areas, and examples of the types of work that meet standards. The PASS documents contain some of the best resources on this topic. ([Visit Understanding the Score](#))

Where is my child doing well? Where does he or she need additional support? And, how can I help?

The score reports provide more than just number scores; they also provide information about subsets of skills that show where your child excels and where he or she may need more support. You can use this information to support your child every day at home. For example, if your child is excelling in reading, you might encourage him or her to read more challenging books, to analyze and summarize the day's news or to research and dig deeper into subjects of interest. If your child needs to improve in a certain subject area, talk to his or her teacher about additional support and materials or use the online resources in the PASS materials to locate activities you can use to reinforce learning at home. The PASS model encourages parents and teachers to use everyday moments as educational opportunities to enhance your child's learning.

Parents are the experts on their child and should review the conversation starters below and choose the information that they believe will be helpful to their child's understanding of the PARCC scores.

Conversation starters with young students

- Do you remember at the end of the last school year you took a test called PARCC?
- PARCC is a different kind of test; you don't memorize facts and fill in the blanks. The questions on the tests help you to think, solve real-world problems, and explain your answers – just like the work you did in class all year and just like the kind of work you will do at a job someday. Plus, you get to take the test on a computer!
- The PARCC test checks each student's progress and provides better information for teachers and parents to see if you need help or if you are ahead of your classmates. We want to know that information so that your teacher, you and I can work together to be sure that you are getting the best education to meet your needs.
- The kids at your school weren't the only ones taking the test – over 850,000 students in New Jersey took the PARCC test!
- The people who work on the PARCC test made a score report for parents. They added up all the scores from all the kids in your school and all of the other ____ graders in New Jersey. So, the score report also has a section that tells us a little about how the other kids in your school and in the state of NJ scored on the test.
- I received the parent's report with your scores on the test and we can look at it together.
- The report uses graphics, colors and descriptions to show how each student performed in English language arts and math. Let's look at the report and see if there are any areas that may have been difficult for you or areas where you did really well.
- Let's look at the overall score in the yellow box and see what it means. There are five levels of performance. Your score is _____ and above the colors your score is marked on top; it is at level _____.
 - Level 1 means: *Highly likely* to need *a lot of* support before going to the next grade level;
 - Level 2 means: *Likely* to need *some* support before going to the next grade level;
 - Level 3 means: *Likely* to need support before going to the next grade level;
 - Level 4 means: *Likely* to be *fully prepared for the next grade level*;
 - Level 5 means: *Highly likely* to be *fully prepared for the next grade level*.
- Levels 4 and 5 mean that you are likely to be fully prepared for the next school year. Levels 3, 2, and 1 mean that you need support. You and your teacher and I can be a great team and use this information to help you be the best learner you can be.
- In the gray boxes below the colors we can see how well you performed compared to other students in the school, district state and all of the other the states where kids took the PARCC test. The scoring categories show us your strengths and the areas for improvement.
- Look below the gray area and that section shows us some details about English language arts and math. Let's read it.
- Do you have any strengths or weaknesses where we should pay attention?
- In the future, the report will also show us how you performed over the last two years and it will show us how your learning improved over time.

These test scores don't tell the whole story about you as a student. The PARCC scores are used along with a lot of other things such as observations, classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, tests, performances, portfolios, skill demonstrations and other classroom-based measurements.

The PARCC test results allow teachers to use the information to improve instruction, and I can use the results to support your learning at home and at school. What can you do with the results?

The following information is provided for clarity in the event that a middle or high school student wants more information on how PARCC scores can be helpful.

The PARCC scoring information will help:

Teachers - The assessment scores will provide teachers with new information about student performance and progress. That gives teachers more insight on their instruction so that they can provide more support and enrichment to students.

Schools - The scores will also provide schools with information to improve the programs that they offer and the support they provide for classroom instruction. Schools can also get an average of scores and compare it with those of the other kids in your school, in the state, and in the other states that use the PARCC exams. This tells schools how well they are serving their students.

Parents - The PARCC score report helps me understand how you are progressing in math and English language arts/literacy (ELA) and how you are performing in comparison to your peers in your grade level and school. It also lets me know whether you need more support or additional challenges. With that information I can work with your teacher to be sure that your instruction is personalized at home and at school.

Students - Learning about your PARCC scores help you, too. An important though often forgotten purpose of high-quality assessments is to help students learn how to improve their own work and learning strategies. Particularly in this information age when “learning to learn” skills are increasingly important, it is critical that assessments help students reflect on and evaluate your own work, as well as become motivated and capable of revising and improving it. It also helps you to seek out additional resources to answer questions, solve problems or find inspiration to raise the level of your work.

Conversation starters with middle level students

- This past spring, you took the PARCC tests. The tests were designed to match the new learning standards that are guiding your classroom instruction. When you took the test, you had to focus on the critical thinking, problem solving and reasoning skills that students need to develop for the next grade level, for college and for a job in today’s world.
- Remember when you used to take the NJASK? It only expected you to fill in the blanks or choose a bubble with the right answer, but the PARCC test even *looks* different, right?
- When you took the PARCC test you were expected to do different things. You didn’t memorize facts anymore. You were expected to provide evidence that you understood *and* that you could apply the concepts that you learned in class.
- That is really different from any other test you ever took before, but it contains the skills you will need for a job someday.
- PARCC is really a different type of test than I ever had to take.
- Since PARCC is such a different type of test, we can’t really compare the old NJASK scores to the PARCC scores, but we can get an idea about what you learned in class this year and how you were able to use that information when you were taking the PARCC test.
- The questions that you saw on the PARCC test should have looked like the new types of assignments that teachers gave you in class every day.

- Parents are getting their copy of the PARCC score reports in the mail. Many kids in NJ are surprised at their scores.
- Educators expected that since this was a new type of test, and students just took it for the first time, the scores would be lower than the NJASK results.
- A change in scores doesn't mean that our schools are performing better or worse or that students are learning more or less. The change in scoring is simply a reflection of how learning new things in new ways can be measured in new ways, too. The new ways of thinking and performing will help you when you go to college and get a job.
- The PARCC scores are sent to parents in a report so that it gives you and me valuable feedback about your progress. However, let's remember that these tests are one of *several* measures that will be used to better understand if your learning is on track. Some of those other ways to check your progress include classroom assignments, grades, observations, homework, projects, quizzes, tests, performances, portfolios, skill demonstrations and other classroom-based measurements.
- It is important to remember, the scores won't be used for placement in special programs or for moving to the next grade level. The kids graduating this year or the next three years won't even need to pass it as a requirement for graduation.
- The PARCC test expects that you will use what you learned in class and show what you mastered without the help of a teacher.
- I just received your score report so let's look at it and figure it out together.
 - Your overall score is here in the yellow box.
 - The performance levels are listed on this colorful bar on the top right. Your score is located to the left of it and marked on the top of it.

Each performance level means:

- Level 1: Did not yet meet expectations
 - Level 2: Partially met expectations
 - Level 3: Approached expectations
 - Level 4: Met expectations
 - Level 5: Exceeded expectations
- In the gray boxes below the colors we can see how well you performed compared to other students in the school, district, state and all of the other the states where kids took the PARCC test. The scoring categories show us your strengths and areas for improvement.
 - Look below the colors and the gray area and that section shows us some details about the subject area. Do you have any strengths or weaknesses where we should pay attention?
 - In the future, the report will also show us how you performed over the last two years, and it will show us how your learning improved over time.
- Remember, these test scores don't tell the whole story about you as a student.
 - Is there anything that you feel is really off target?
 - Do you think that there is anything we should do about that?
 - What can you do with the results?

- We could also use the Internet to find ideas about how you could practice or do new things that we may not have thought about yet.
- You and I could work with your teacher to make sure that you are getting the best support that you need to do your best.
- The PARCC test results allow teachers to use the information to improve instruction, and I can use the results to support your learning at home and at school. There are a lot of other things we can find out about the PARCC test and the scores. Let's look at that stuff on the weekend when we can spend some time on it.

The following information is provided for clarity in the event that a high school student wants more information on some of the benefits of the PARCC scores.

Schools are required to test every year to learn if they are doing a good job. School districts give students tests so that they can find out if the school is:

- Meeting your learning needs to help you get ready for the next grade, graduation, college and the career that you choose;
- Understanding your interests and how you learn best;
- Designing class work to help you and the other students learn at your best; and
- Offering and supporting programs that are good for kids.
- The scores will help you, too. An important, though often forgotten, purpose of assessments is to help students learn how to improve their own work and learning strategies. Particularly in this information age when "learning to learn" skills are increasingly important, it is critical that assessments help students reflect on and evaluate their own work and become motivated and capable of revising and improving it. It also helps students to seek out additional resources to answer questions, solve problems or find inspiration to raise the level of your work.
- Of course, they want your teachers, you and I to have access to your results so that we can work together to help you do your best.

Conversation starters with high school students

- Remember last school year when you took that PARCC test at the end of the year? Did you hear that the scores came in? You probably remember that last spring there was a lot of discussion about the PARCC tests. Much of the controversy around the test was not so much about the tests themselves, but how the results are used. No one except you, me and the educators at your school will see your scores. The state looks at averages for all the kids that took the test, but they don't see any individual student scores.
- When the state averages came in, the results were lower than kids used to get on the HSPA. Since it is a different type of test based on a different type of teaching and learning, educators expected that the scores numbers would be lower than the NJASK results so a lot of kids in NJ will surprised at their scores. A change in scores doesn't mean that our schools are performing better or worse or that students are learning more or less. The change in scoring is simply a reflection of how learning new things in new ways can be measured in new ways, too. The new ways of thinking and performing will help you when you go to college and get a job.

- **The results of the PARCC test will not affect student placement in special programs or grade level.**
- **New Jersey has exempted 11th graders who participate in other testing programs such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs in English language arts from participating in the PARCC 11th Grade ELA EOC assessments.**
- **The graduating classes of 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 will not have to pass the PARCC assessment as a requirement for graduation.**

- High school students are likely to understand the score report and can discuss it in full.
- The PARCC scores are sent to parents so that it gives you and me valuable feedback about your progress. However, let's remember that these tests are one of *several* measures that will be used to better understand whether your learning is on track. Some of those other ways to check your progress include classroom assignments, grades, observations, homework, projects, quizzes, tests, performances, portfolios, skill demonstrations and other classroom-based measurements.
- Looking at the score report...
- Is there anything that you feel is really off target?
- Do you think that there is anything we should do about that?
- What can you do with the results?
 - You can look at the results and think about how you learn and practice schoolwork.
- We could also use the Internet to find ideas about how you could practice or do new things that we may not have thought about yet.
- You and I could work with your teacher to make sure that you are getting the best support that you need in order to do your best.
 - You can also think about whether you use the things that you learn in school to help you in your daily life. If you do, then great, keep up the good work and let me know if anything changes. I'll check in with you.
 - If you aren't using what you are learning or if you are struggling to make it apply to the real world, then let's think about what we can do to make that better for you.

If you want to look at the report you can; I'm going to use it when I go to parent teacher conferences so that I can talk to your teacher about how we can support you so that you get the best education.

Additional resources to support parent's conversations about PARCC score reports with their child:

- To view a PowerPoint presentation about PARCC in New Jersey, including understanding score reports, visit <http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/parcc/SBOEPARCCUpdate0215.pdf>
- For more information about the PARCC score report and to view sample test questions, visit understandthescore.org.
- To learn more about grade level expectations, view the PTA's Parents' Guide to Student Success at pta.org/parents/.
- For tips and tools to help your child succeed in school, visit bealearninghero.org.

The PASS 4 toolkit contains the PARCC information and resources that will support parents as they learn about and talk to their child and his or her teachers.